

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 /020 W

----- 015456

R 072152Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 960

UNCLAS OTTAWA 3591

DOT FOR ENGLE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, OECD, CA

SUBJ: DATA ON SPEED LIMIT/HIGHWAY FATALITIES

REF: STATE 204522

1. ONLY THREE CANADIAN PROVINCES HAVE REDUCED SPEED LIMITS:
BRITISH COLUMBIA, ONTARIO AND QUEBEC.

2. BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT, AFTER NOTING REDUCTION IN
HIGHWAY FATALITIES IN U.S. AS RESULT OF LOWERED SPEED LIMITS,
ANNOUNCED SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION IN FALL OF 1974. RURAL
FREEWAY SPEED LIMITS WERE REDUCED FROM 70 MPH TO 60 MPH;
URBAN FREEWAYS FROM 60 OR 70 MPH TO 55 MPH; TWO-LANE
UNDIVIDED RURAL HIGHWAYS WERE REDUCED FROM 60 TO 55 MPH
WHERE CONDITIONS WERE GOOD AND TO 50 MPH WHERE CONDITIONS
WERE POOR AND TRAFFIC VOLUMES HIGH. "BEFORE AND AFTER"
STUDIES OF VEHICLE TRAVELING SPEEDS WERE MADE AND THEY
SHOWED THAT WHERE A 10 MPH REDUCTION WAS REQUIRED THE
85 PERCENTILE SPEED DROPPED BY AN AVERAGE OF 5.3 MPH
AND AVERAGE SPEED DROPPED BY 4.1 MPH. IT WAS ALSO
NOTED THAT SPEED LIMIT WAS MORE LIKELY TO BE EXCEEDED
ON 50 MPH ROADS THAN ON 55 MPH ROADS, SUGGESTING
THAT MOST MOTORISTS WISH TO DRIVE IN THE MID-50 MPH
RANGE. THE "PACE" ON MOST TWO-LANE HIGHWAYS IS 50-60
MPH. COMPARISON OF FATALITIES BETWEEN TWO 12-MONTH
PERIODS, NOVEMBER 1973 THROUGH OCTOBER 1974 AND
NOVEMBER 1974 (WHEN REDUCTIONS WERE IMPLEMENTED) THROUGH
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OCTOBER 1975, PRODUCED FOLLOWING RESULTS:

A. DURING NOVEMBER 1974 - OCTOBER 1975 PERIOD ALL PUBLIC ROADS IN B.C. THERE WERE 623 FATAL ACCIDENTS, IN WHICH 742 PEOPLE WERE KILLED. DURING PREVIOUS 12-MONTH PERIOD THERE WERE 710 FATAL ACCIDENTS WITH 833 FATALITIES.

B. FOR PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS ALONE, NOVEMBER 1974 - OCTOBER 1975 FIGURES WERE 440 FATAL ACCIDENTS WITH 535 FATALITIES. PREVIOUS 12-MONTH PERIOD FIGURES WERE 518 FATAL ACCIDENTS WITH 625 FATALITIES.

C. BREAKING ABOVE FIGURES DOWN INTO HIGHWAYS HAVING A MAXIMUM OF 50 MPH OR ABOVE, THERE WERE 306 FATAL ACCIDENTS IN NOVEMBER 1974 - OCTOBER 1975 COMPARED TO 376 FATAL ACCIDENTS IN PREVIOUS 12-MONTH PERIOD. REDUCTION OF 70 ACCIDENTS REPRESENTS 18.6 PERCENT DECREASE OVER PREVIOUS YEAR.

D. ALL FATAL ACCIDENTS IN B.C. DROPPED BY 87, A 12.2 PERCENT REDUCTION. OVERALL REDUCTION IN FATALITIES THUS CONCENTRATED ON HIGHER SPEED ROADS WHICH WERE SUBJECT OF SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION. B.C. GOVERNMENT ANALYSTS ATTRIBUTES ONLY HALF OF REDUCTION TO LOWERED SPEED LIMITS WITHOUT INDICATING WHAT OTHER CAUSE MIGHT BE.

3. BECAUSE ONTARIO AND QUEBEC HAVE ONLY RECENTLY REDUCED HIGHWAY SPEED LIMITS (ON JANUARY 1, 1976 AND AUGUST 1, 1976, RESPECTIVELY), STATISTICS ON HIGHWAY FATALITY REDUCTIONS AS A RESULT OF LOWERED SPEED LIMITS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE. EMBASSY WILL REQUEST THEN AND FORWARD WHEN AVAILABLE IF DESIRED BY DOT. ALLOWANCE WILL HAVE TO BE MADE WHEN USING THESE STATISTICS, HOWEVER, FOR THE EFFECT OF MANDATORY SEAT BELT WEARING LEGISLATION WHICH WAS ENACTED IN ONTARIO JANUARY 1, 1976 AND IN QUEBEC ON AUGUST 15, 1976. DOT REQUESTED TO INFORM EMBASSY WHETHER IT SHOULD OBTAIN QUEBEC AND ONTARIO STATISTICS WHEN THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.

4. COPIES OF FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS BEING UNCLASSIFIED

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FORWARDED TO DOT BY POUCH:

A. MOTOR VEHICLE TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS 1974, WHICH CONTAINS SUMMARIES OF 1973 AND 1974 TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN CANADA.

B. TRANSPORT CANADA'S 1975 EARLY TRAFFIC FATALITY REPORTING ESTIMATES.

C. "THE BRITISH COLUMBIA EXPERIENCE OF LOWERING
MAXIMUM SPEED LIMITS."
DUEMLING

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, DATA, DEATHS, HIGHWAYS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA03591
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760338-0948
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760985/aaaacvjh.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 204522
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cahillha
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 FEB 2004 by MaustMC>; APPROVED <14 JAN 2005 by cahillha>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DATA ON SPEED LIMIT/HIGHWAY FATALITIES
TAGS: ENRG, CA, OECD
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006